

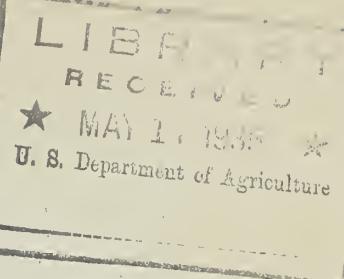
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THE HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

The Annual Campaign against Clothes Moths



A radio interview between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Dr. E. A. Back, Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine, broadcast Wednesday, May 8, 1935, in the Department of Agriculture period, National Farm and Home Hour, by NBC and a network of 50 associate radio stations.

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SALISBURY: Miss Van Deman, I see you have Dr. Back of the Bureau of Entomology with you today. That's a combination that bodes ill for the clothes moths.

VAN DEMAN: Yes, Dr. Back and I are here for our third annual campaign against the clothes moth. Chemical warfare, we might call it.

SALISBURY: Are you going to give 'em tear gas or poison gas?

VAN DEMAN: Oh, we won't stop with bringing tears to the eyes of the moths. When we start to wage chemical warfare on moths, we believe in giving them such a powerful dose of naphthalene fumes or paradichlorobenzene that they turn up their toes forever.

But Dr. Back, I didn't mean to steal any of your thunder. Perhaps this year has brought some newer and better ways to get rid of moths. What about those cedarized closets we hear so much about?

BACK: You mean the cedarized paper closets and chests that are said to be tight enough to keep moths out and protect your garments after you put them in?

VAN DEMAN: Yes, those are the ones. Lots of women I know think they're absolutely moth-proof. Some even think they'll kill moth eggs.

BACK: The experiments in the Department of Agriculture don't show anything like that. Quite to the contrary. These cedarized chests and closets are not tight enough to keep a full-grown moth from finding her way inside, and once she's inside there is nothing to stop her from laying her eggs on the woolens and furs. And there's nothing to keep those eggs from hatching into the white worms that do the real damage.

VAN DEMAN: The smell of cedar doesn't really put a check on moths then?

BACK: No, none at all. And it isn't permanent anyway. It comes either from cedar oil sprayed onto the paper or from a pad of cedar shavings. Before the summer is very far advanced this pleasant smell of cedar disappears almost entirely and you have left just an ordinary paper container.

VAN DEMAN: Anyway, it takes something stronger than a strong smell to drive moths away or to kill them, doesn't it?

BACK: Yes, as you suggested a moment ago, when a homemaker starts out to rid her property of moths, she might as well make up her mind to use plenty of the chemicals that kill them.

VAN DEMAN: Well, what do you call plenty, Dr. Back? Let's say we had a good-sized trunkful of woolens and furs here, how much napthalene flakes or paradichlorobenzene crystals would you say to put in that trunk?

BACK: About a pound if the trunk is reasonably tight and has a good tight-fitting lid. I'd rather be generous with the napthalene or the paradichlorobenzene and play absolutely safe. What kills moths is the gas given off by these slowly evaporating chemicals and you need enough of them to give a sufficiently concentrated gas to do the work over a long period.

VAN DEMAN: What about a storage closet? If you recommend a pound to a good-sized trunk, how much would a whole closetful of things need?

BACK: Probably 2 or 3 pounds to the average closet. If you can seal it up tight with gummed paper or with the tape professional exterminators use, then you can get along with less. For instance, if you can seal up your trunk that way, you might get along for two or three months with half a pound instead of a pound. The mistake people often make is not using enough of these chemicals to give a concentrated vapor. They think because they can smell the vapor and are repelled by it themselves that the moths will be affected the same way. But they aren't. I've seen moths go right on feeding in an atmosphere that to me was unpleasantly heavy with the odor of napthalene. To kill adult moths and prevent eggs from hatching, you must have a concentrated gas.

VAN DEMAN: Than a little gadget that I saw advertised the other day as just the thing to hang up in the closet for all the year around moth protection, wouldn't do very much protecting.

BACK: No, it might help a little, but it couldn't be counted on to keep moths out of the closet, or to kill any.

VAN DEMAN: The description of this device said "ingredients tested and recommended by U. S. Department of Agriculture."

BACK: But here's the catch in that. This device probably does contain one of the chemicals we recommend as a moth killer -- probably paradichlorobenzene. But as I've tried to make clear, it is one thing to use the right chemical and another to use it in sufficient quantity to be effective.

SALISBURY: Miss Van Deman, before you and Dr. Back go, I know there are a number of people in this audience who would like to hear you spell that seven syllable jaw-breaker -- paradichlorobenzene -- will you demonstrate?

VAN DEMAN: I'll try to. It's spelled exactly as it sounds -- p-a-r-a-d-i-c-h-l-o-r-o-b-e-n-z-e-n-e (para-di-chloro-ben-zene). And with that I'll say good-bye for this time.